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OUTPOSTS

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LOUIS ADEANE

Summer Sleeper

THE stars hang light amid the twining leaves;
Wrist over cheek and slouched in shining bed,
O summer sleeper, drawn to scented sheaves,
Time ticks quite close and small beside your head.

Black sunless sheaves array the wheel of night,
The reaper moon comes sharpened to its mark,
The starry symbols form, the fruit hangs light,
The hunter waits in heaven for the dark;

Through the long leaves the lion moves,
The arrow's strung but cannot end its course;
The goat steps safe on silver-pointed hooves,
A closed procession paces to its source

And marks the time to go, and lights the leaves
Around your mortal moon-dishevelled head—
Caged in your senses, sleepy in the sheaves,
O lit articulate dust, time is your bed.

N. K. CRUICKSHANK

Rilke and the Dumb Spirit

THEN suddenly, and without warning, thought
Refused to grip. All he experienced
Became a futile slope, where impotent
Words backslid into silence, nothing held.

The power within him froze; longing for speech
Moved harshly still, tormenting, effort-full,
As streams beneath armour of winter thrust
Their lithe, kinetic daubs of shadow.

He shared their fear. He knew the want that trees
Groan with in parched and perished Aprils.
He knew the anguish of the wave unable
To find a shore anywhere on which to break.

VERNON WATKINS

Music of Colours: The Blossom Scattered

O, BUT how white is white, white from shadows come,
Sailing white of clouds, not seen before
On any snowfield, any shore;
Or this dense blue, delivered from the tomb,
White of the risen body, fiery blue of sky,
Light the saints teach us, light we learn to adore;
Not space revealed it, but the needle's eye
Love's dark thread holding, when we began to die.
It was the leper's, not the bird's cry,
Gave back that glory, made that glory more.

I cannot sound the nature of that spray
Lifted on wind, the blossoms falling away,
A death, a birth, a dazzling mystery,
As though each petal stirring held the whole tree
That grew, created on the Lord's day.
There is no falling now. Yet for time's sake
These blossoms are scattered. They fall. How still they are.
They drop, they vanish, where all blossoms break.
Who touches one dead blossom touches every star.

So the green Earth is first no colour and then green.
Spirits who walk, who know
All is untouchable, and, knowing this, touch so,
Who know the music by which white is seen,
See the world's colours in flashes come and go.
The marguerite's petal is white, is wet with rain,
Is white, then loses white, and then is white again
Not from time's course, but from the living spring,
Miraculous whiteness, a petal, a wing,
Like light, like lightning, soft thunder, white as jet,
Ageing on ageless breaths. The ages are not yet.

Is there a tree, a bud, that knows not this:
White breaks from darkness, breaks from such a kiss
No mind can measure? Locked in the branching knot,
Conception shudders; that interior shade
Makes light in darkness, light where light was not;
Then the white petal, of whitest darkness made,
Breaks, and is silent. Immaculate they break,

Consuming vision, blinding eyes awake,
Dazzling the eyes with music, light's unspoken sound,
White born of bride and bridegroom, when they take
Love's path through Hades, engendered of dark ground.

Leda remembers. The rush of wings cast wide.
Sheer lightning, godhead, descending on the flood.
Night, the late, hidden waters on the moon's dark side.
Her virgin secrecy, doomed against time to run.
Morning. The visitation. All colours hurled in one.
Struggling with night, with radiance! That smothering
glory cried;
"Heavenborn am I. White-plumaged heart, you beat against
the sun!"
All recollection sinking from the dazzled blood.

She woke, and her awakened wings were fire,
Darkened with light; O blinding white was she
With white's bewildering darkness. So that secret choir
Know, in the thicket, and witness more than we,
Listening to early day, dew's voice, the lightest feet,
As though Saint Francis passing, told who they were,
Fledged of pure spirit, though upheld by air.
I think one living is already there,
So sound asleep she is, her breath so faint,
She knows, she welcomes the footstep of the saint,
So still, so moving, joy sprung of despair,
And the two feasts, where light and darkness meet.

MURIEL GRAINGER

Ascension

YOU have ascended beyond our comprehension
Into the different, rainbow-bordered air,
Meeting the children of light, the sons of the morning.
Under the muffling clouds, our hills are bare.

Can you bring back, as our angels suggest in whispers,
A distillation of that which you went to learn?
Oh, we must stay so still; we must listen, listen,
Lest we miss your second coming, your rare return.

JUDITH WRIGHT

Dark Gift

THE flower begins in the dark
Where life is not.
Death has a word to speak
and the flower begins.

How small, how closely bound
in nothing's net,
the word waits in the ground
for the cloak earth spins.

The root goes down in the night
and from night's mud
the unmade, the inchoate,
starts to take shape and rise.

The blind, the upward hand
clenches its bud.
What message does death send
from the grave where he lies?

Open, green hand, and give
the dark gift you hold.
Oh, wild mysterious gold!
Oh, act of passionate love!

MARGARET CROSLAND

The Statue

HER body in the rock,
her body the infinite flesh
in canyon or quarry,
lonely beckoning shape in the dried earth;
how shall his hands
drag her limbs from space,
the red blossom of her breasts
open in stone, her hair slowly untangle
in phœnix fire blackened and lost?

Only now, when sunlight hollows her lips,
only now will she live
without pity of love
crowding hopelessly round her.
How shall his hands become carefnl, relentless—
and she human, forgotten.

Do not imagine her mouth might speak,
her limbs move in dancing:
nor ask, how shall his hands forbid?

ERIC NIXON

The Stone

THE stone is freckled by the kiss of rain
centuries have driven to its face,
leans under the oval leaves
a landscape elsewhere unknown
so unaware of pain.

Wind has scoured its ranges and its dales
tirelessly through depth of night and white of day
sandless and screeless as the skin of streams.
Here see the polished shell a sealife home
before these fields and trees were grown
to flesh the stubborn bone.

Stars it has known and seas
travelling each globe for centuries
through space of earth or circled air;
has stared unseeing at the sun
like April spread throughout the sky
stone of a sea which has slipped by.

Thus stone and bone fleshed and unfleshed revert
and are what before they were
in beauty clothed or beauty bare,
like this one stone beyond despair,
whilst we run elsewhere
marking our stay with stones which know no care.

MARGARET WILLY

Singer

"What is there truly done that is not prayer?
. . Where I create, I am true." RILKE : *Letters*

WATCHING your face there, singer, I recognize
How each makes in the shape of a prayer the thing he loves.

It is to God he speaks, the scientist with his test-tubes
Intent in the silent laboratory at midnight;
The ploughman at his furrow, anticipating
The emerald thrust of the blade of winter wheat;
And all who with a similar devotion
Labour in faith and singleness of vision :
My father, mute and absorbed above his tool-bench,
Surrounded by pots of paint, with his nails and chisel;
I at my desk in the solitary struggle
To name experience and frame a meaning;
And you, the architect of a song—most entirely
You, come alive, with the mask off : losing yourself to complete it;

Made one beyond the tug of the daily divisions :
Time at the leash and the never-quite-achieving;
The partial and passing vision; the flesh that rebels
Day-long and night-long bruised by the adamant will.
Surly and silent when you would please, and wounding
Where loving most, you know the paradox
The contrariety that is a man;
And above all else, how hard it is to say it
In words—their poverty for your confusions.
But this is a different speech—the makers' language,
Springing like leaves from creating hand and heart.

So soar, spread your wings, song—out through the bars of your prison
High past the labyrinth to air that is clearer,
To a blue height, a beckoning light, to a beacon star.
Too soon, plodding accustomed pavements again,
The singer grows clumsy and fumbles, locked fast in his dumbness,
Awakens to Adam and aches with the ancient pain.

Sing on then, a bodiless voice : slip the chains of
your nature,
For more than yourself, all you would be, O fallible
creature,
Fulfilled on the crest of your song, your prayer,
you are.

EDMUND COOPER

Letter to a Dead Sailor

I WILL create your memory again
in sea waves on the uncropped meadows
and sea murmurs in the leaves of inland trees;
creating you as a dream stature
of remembered gestures in forgotten situations;
watching your smile behind the opaque sky,
hearing your voice behind the voice of trees
and, behind the wind, touching your body.
I will create your memory again
in the lost excitement of the smell of land
stretching over skeins of tired waters
whose distance touches gold threads of beaches
and palm-tree cradles of blue mountain rings,
where once the gleaming dark of bodies
rippled to nocturnal songs.
I will reconstruct our shared emotions
as an unfamiliar curtain of southern stars
danced over the ponderous roll of the ship,
or the seaboard of the western world
stared its own galactic wheel
at the sea's night harvesting.
I will reconstruct our shared emotions,
the remembered silence of long sea-voyages,
days shaken black on northern journeys,
nights of moonlight on a dark sea-mirror,
the bow's night music and the singing wake.
Now we, who wrapped the world in carved
blue miles,
are lost; you in your destruction, I in mine;
you in your death, I in my existence.
But I will create your memory again
and take your death for my death
and, in my life, return you into living.

JANE LUNT

The Proud Sailor

TALL arrogant children, waiting in the windows,
I am the proud sailor from the summer channel
who having been drowned, returns to watch your drowning.

O you may look to the orchards and the wind blowing
across the brown fields once more broken with spring,
but Rome was a dream, there will be no geese flying

over the walls of your gardens, and I say
your city of love will suffer the sea's explosion,
your waterfront houses fall from the intimate sun.

You will drown slowly, and the sea take pleasure
in seeing your wide streets fill with her terrible flood,
your own arms crying for arms in love's republic.

I shall await you among the weedy rigging
and the wrecked prows prouder than love or self,
where the bright fish cherish the fruit of the reaping gale,

and you will learn then, as I learned in the summer,
that neither can ships nor lovers circumnavigate
pride's ocean country, my totocracy of death.

PHOEBE HESKETH

Death in Winter

THE hunting horn no longer
Awakes the silent hill;
The huntsman haunts the stable,
And hounds lie still.

An idle plough is leaning
On winter-furrowed land;
And Sorrow plucks my heartstrings
With a cold white hand.

ANNE TURNER

Villanelle for a Sculptor

O WORSHIP these strong monuments to joy
That one man's being lifted idiot-high
Of the dormant earth the dying now destroy.

I followed the way of the ivory ankled boy
Who fled his people and passed their preacher by
To worship these strong monuments to joy.

In dazzled paths rich with the sun's alloy
Of gold and honey that heaps the dreaming eye
Of the dormant earth the dying now destroy.

Away from stifled crowds where pleasures cloy
The follow my leader minds, we climbed the sky
To worship these strong monuments to joy.

And watch the drab procession, who employ
Their golden day for a funeral, and decry
The dormant earth the dying now destroy.

The pulsing of his blood for fashion's toy
The dreamer joins his wake—for us his cry:
O worship these strong monuments to joy.
The dormant earth the dying now destroy.

R. L. GREGORY

Night is my Body

NIGHT is my body webbed with mysteries
No key can turn upon nor stick divine
Without the world is rifled by surprise
And time topples into seas of ruin.

Talk is not tangible, for birds of wind
Are words my tongue has never formalised,
These eyes my burning cataracts are blind
To every century but where

The dark is trespassed with my blood
And stars are bubbles that the heart has blown
In moments mad with joy. Nor shall they burst
Nor the song succumb until

The unknown grave creeps over happy limbs
And eyes like laughing swords grow blunt,
Until the push of pain against the moon
Falls in both ecstasy and anger.

J. T. BROCKWAY

Wild Duck

THESE high, pale evenings tear the heart to shreds:
When cirrus spreads thin shawls across the sky
And the sun goes down in picture-postcard reds,
Adds the bitter touch: banality.

Crouched on the skyline like a wounded beast,
The city grovels, silenced by the day.
Thin spires prick out the pride of pope and priest:
Vanity, the first, faint stars reply.

Dark comet, sudden, shooting from the gorse,
The wild duck zig-zags, staggers into flight,
Swerves in its track, essays another course,
Pits a long, grey neck against the night:
Uncertain, as the eye that holds its quest,
On what cold isle the dark will yield a nest.

TERENCE HEYWOOD

An Aged Eccentric

HE'S one who buys The Times for its third leaders,
Is more interested in the linesman than the play;
He always puts his money on outsiders,
And stops to peer down manholes on the way.

He keeps a notebook full of lapsus linguæ;
Observes the shapes of ear-lobes; if he can
Measures the mean diameters of chimneys,
And studies more the luggage than the man.

You'd have to be a broker to out-talk him
On quaint by-products, or a politician
To match him on side-issues: all abortive,
Freakish, exotic programmes are his mission.

He keeps so well to his outlandish corners
Even detective Death has missed his cave:
For though his side-tracks do not by-pass glory
They are not paths that lead him to the grave.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

Statue in a City Square

THE crowds drain from the city's empty heart;
The stone beast crouches in the impotent rain.
Discreet hotels cabin the goat-god's sport,
Whose wilderness is now no longer green,
Whose piping's a sophisticated art
So purified that no one can complain.
I was a stranger here; stranger remain:
One who has barbarous thoughts of barging seas
That blast the rocks and shake the landslip down;
Of presences sure-footed on the screes,
Moving ahead, keeping the crag between;
Of half-heard songs in solitudes of trees—
But here there are bouquets in Cellophane.
Stranger I was, and stranger I remain.

The buyers of fertiliser now go home
To pot and prune and make secure with twine
Whatever sensuous thing is left to dream.
There are no roots here, where the beast of stone
Broods like a deity—of self-esteem?—
Round which the darkness opens in a yawn.
Artemis, Artemis, wherefor have you gone?
Stranger I was, and stranger I remain.

LEONARD CLARK

The Tunnel

FROM the bird-haunted forest
Where the dew hung still on frond and leaf,
I came to an unexpected tunnel
And moved through fog on soundless feet.
The walls were smeared with blood
Dripping their lightless drops into black streams
Flowing unmurmuringly their steaming lengths
Parallel with my stumbling.
And other birds, eyeless and tongueless,
Flew ever backwards and forwards
About my head and eyes;
I was entombed in an avenue of death.
Then I stepped into the ashen dawn of some strange,
sleeping town,
Where stars had paled before the touch of day.
Its streets were all on fire
And wild with frenzied cries,
The lamps were full of prisoned blackbirds singing loud
With burning throats and incandescent eyes.

HARDIMAN SCOTT

Variation on a theme already stated

YOU, you of all people know how sunlight
Can open a wave, as growth so gently
But suddenly opens the curled petals,
And slumbered-over depths are silvered white
To burst their glass-spun brilliance silently,
Hold to distance their perpetual crystal.

And I have seen you, too, poised to the light,
Wave's brilliance and petals' bloom upon you,
As, unpausing, came declared to the sun.
Remember, how we walked from the hill, quite
Possessed? It was then, talking done, we knew
What the light opened was confirmed and one.
So hold this brilliance spun for Time to claim,
In the fast flash of light give love its name.

REVIEWS

Epitaphs and Occasions: Roy Fuller (John Lehmann, 6s.).
The Palisades of Fear: Ronald Bottrall (PL Editions, 6s.).

AS a thinker, Mr. Fuller is pitted with the acid of contemporary disillusionment: as an artist, he is possessed of strength—of form and discipline—beyond his era.

Intellectually and psychologically speaking, he is something of a leftist defeatist. The fabled "revolution" of the Thirties did not come up to expectation, and Labour's victory by legitimate vote left his hopes for a clean sweep disappointed. All history since appears to him as a kind of tragic aftermath. "Over-fond of Uncle Joe," as he admits himself to be, his background and education, he tells us, have made him an incurable "bourgeois." He sees his life as a useless postscript to a more comely but lost manner of living; and awaits, in ambiguous frame of mind, the day when

> ". . . world and way and godhead pass
> To vulgar but triumphant brass."

But if Mr. Fuller inclines to pessimism in matters social and political, his verse remains firm, conscientious and sure. His poems are bulwarks against disintegration. One of the most formal of our younger poets, Mr. Fuller may be termed a classical imagist—that is, as a writer in whose work the image is subordinated to the principal idea, and not—as in the case of Mr. Kirkup—left to proliferate in unrestricted freedom.

Because, then, of their laconic utterance, these poems often read like epitaphs. Lapidary and merciless, they express their author's funeral sense of history; and in so doing, with "classic parsimony," they write the obituary of a generation—the Marxist generation between two wars.

If Mr. Fuller is not the major poet (status of Wordsworth, Blake or Donne?) which the T.L.S. suspects him to be, his fine minor talent has no damp spots in it. Astringent as a mouth-wash, his poems serve to take away the taste of rank pretension or the cloying flavour of exotic self-pity.

In comparison with Mr. Fuller, Mr. Bottrall may be described as a poet of the intellect rather than of the intelligence. His is the discursive and speculative mind. He ramifies rather than concentrates his themes, as the following passage from *Pandora* will show:

"The ambiguous box, loitering in a corner,
Capricious gift of Zeus, attracts our prying fingers
And then the air is smothered with a hellish murmur
Of boils, blains, itches, coughs, coryzas, hæmorrhages,
Waspishly hovering for the unfledged newcomer."

"His power to convince," wrote Dr. F. R. Leavis, "lies in his rhythms and his imagery." This power, however, does not prevent him from certain infelicitious juxtapositions ("The night strikes hollow*ly* and thi*n*"), and certain gnomic platitudes which are neither witty nor musical:

"Life is death is
Death is life is"

Both these poets work with a dry material, but Mr. Bottrall's is unusually sapless. He is brittle biscuit to Mr. Fuller's sherry.

DEREK STANFORD.

Underworlds: Francis Scarfe (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.).
In Wake of Wind: Gloria Komai (Sylvan Press).

MR. SCARFE'S after-audenary verses are distinguished by their sincerity. They display a clean pity, clear thought, sense and sensibility, and (if not passion, then) an open appreciation of the wells where passion should lie.

It is impossible not to be reminded of the work of other poets, in lines sometimes apparently deliberate, such as Joyce in "O lean out of the window, Unwind your golden hair," or Eliot in "an anguish breeds within the bone," or Auden-cum-Louis-MacNeice in

"the skin of the eye in battered faces
and in smug powdered faces
needs a telescope or the love of god
to see beyond the pyramids of Glasgow."

The word *gold* and the image of *golden hair* occur seemingly too often and too well-set to be accidental, but irritate and leave an impression of the poet's becoming choked and scarfed with hair.

Two kinds of development are thoroughly marked. There is the development from boyhood—

"our first love was the sea
that rolled like colts between our shining knees—"

through adolescence watching boyhood, to the young man in the world——

"Who sent me out alone
To tread these barren streets?—"

and finally to the guilt of Atomic Man.

There is also the development from casual scenes, objectively treated, to the "ladder down which I go to the dark places of the mind."

Apart from the influences mentioned, and an occasional tendency to jacobethanism, these poems are never obscure even when deeply brought, and full of a sane despair. The epigram on Picasso's *femme endormie* is perfect: and there are many pieces of sculptural purity and most natural beauty.

Little apples, some say, are sweet. Others favour little potatoes and find little apples sour. Gloria Komai's twenty short poems are in the main brief tributes and passing sighs gaining a dignity from their eponymous dedicatees which is not inherent in the verse. Some of the descriptive sketches are reminiscent of the careful pencil drawings of Hopkins and Ruskin—"hissed pearls boil" (spray) or "dragonflies like winged mosaics" or "bird-high black moody clouds." The poet, chameleon-like, snaps at an image while three others escape. The colours are bright, the metaphors sharp, the thoughts pass like showers:

"So briefly struck
We burn yet brighter for the too small dark."

The charming booklet has a poor title—*Angels and Lilac* would more manifest its essence. The technique is pointilliste, the chief fault is cataloguery: one is left with a feeling of something splendid having passed, seen only with the corner of the eye.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

The Pisan Cantos: Ezra Pound (Faber & Faber, 12s. 6d.).

EZRA POUND has elsewhere defined an epic as a poem including history; and these cantos project not only an attitude towards, but an atmosphere of history. While they contain a stronger emotive element, and are easier to read than the earlier cantos, one would be ill-advised to presume to an understanding of them without considerable study. This is a matter not of obscurity but of depth. Those who, like this reviewer, believe that a poem in English should contain the minimum of quotations from other languages, will yet have to admit the justification for Pound's extensive use of such quotations in this work.

The cantos are continuously stimulating and fascinating. In places they rise to a level unsurpassed by any of Pound's earlier work, which is about the same as saying that better *verse libre* has not been written. The form varies in texture to a considerable extent; at times the rhythms are fragmentary and incorporate normal speech patterns, as when Pound makes an aside about his American Army detention :—"Says the Japanese sentry : Paark yu djeep over there." In contrast we find the form refined to the purity of the Libretto in Canto LXXXI, which can be considered out of context more readily than any other passage :

> ". . . The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.
> Pull down thy vanity, it is not man
> Made courage, or made order, or made grace,
> Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.
> Learn of the green world what can be thy place
> In scaled invention or true artistry, . . ."

There is not an atom of self-pity in the cantos, and what bitterness there is we find reserved for the banking system :—"Lending that which is made out of nothing." Pound's objectivity comes from the total understanding of a very considerable artist. One is left with an impression of great sorrow at the falling-away of the old culture, but one looks in vain for the negative attitude of, say, Edith Sitwell—the surrender to the inevitability of final chaos.

> "If the hoar frost grip thy tent
> Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent."

JOHN SANKEY.

Arabic-Andalusian Casidas: Harold Morland (Phœnix Press, 5s.).
No Summer Song: James Brockway (The Fortune Press, 6s.).
From Brabourne: Ernest Miles (Geerings, 1s. 0d.).
Followers of the Plough: Jack McQuoid (The Lisnagarvey Press, 2s.).

BETWEEN the history and art of a people there are natural parallels—witness Moorish architecture with its spawning of domes and feverish arabesques when Islam was a fire and a fury storming through Spain. Witness also the poetry of that tempestuous marriage, of which in *Arabic-Andalusian Casidas* Harold Morland presents a brilliantly translated selection. Close-wrought like arabesques, the *casidas* are fiercely erotic—in striking contrast with the rather tedious devotional Spanish poetry *pur-sang* with which in their later (12th Century) development they are contemporary. In a scholarly Introduction, Mr. Morland considers possible Arabic influences on the poetry of modern Spain and cites Sr. Don Juan R. Jiménez, whose work is indeed marked by an ecstatic lyricism attuned to that of the *casidas*. But Spanish poetry has been so much influenced by French that speculation about more remote ancestries tends to be unprofitable.

I have called that translation brilliant, and advisedly; for a translator's achievement is never higher than when he succeeds, as Mr. Morland has done, in capturing the colour and essence of an alien poetry.

A refreshing thing about Mr. James Brockway, whose *No Summer Song* offers a choice of work in which the best far outweighs the mediocre, is that he never vanishes into a fog of "private meaning," but does consistently practise as poet the virtues that as critic he has preached—clarity, lyricism, a regard for music and poetic form. There is delicate imagery— a touch of *aquarelle*—in *White Cyclamens,* but there is strength and a healthy astringency also, as in *The Discoverers.* In a context of much good work, *Winter of Impotence* and *Sisyphus* stand out as particularly fine.

From Brabourne, by Mr. Ernest Miles, is a quick sketch which, without approaching high poetry, does convey something of the spirit of rural Kent as a microcosm of an England not too much idealized, but seen in depth and with a sane affection. If it comes perilously near at times to cloying emotionalism, that is redeemed by the evident sincerity of the poem as a whole. There is strong influence, in the best of this work, of Miss Sackville West's *The Land.*

Followers of the Plough contains leaves from a poet's sketch-book with, mainly, the Ulster countryside as the chosen terrain. Like his Kent-loving contemporary, Mr. Jack McQuoid works mostly in a technique of swift impressionism and is more successful when he does so than in the three-page-length poems, which lose spontaneity without gaining strength.

MICHAEL REDGROVE.

Poems, 1935-1948: Clifford Dyment (Dent & Sons Ltd., 7s. 6d.).
After the Bombing: Edmund Blunden (Macmillan, 6s. 0d.)
Poetic Technique: Oliver C. de C. Ellis, Geoffrey Johnson, Christabel Burniston, Introduction by Walter de la Mare (John Sherratt & Son for the Poetry Lovers' Fellowship, 7s. 6d.).

MR. DYMENT offers sixteen new poems and forty old ones. A dozen or so of these earlier ones are revised. The revision is not extensive and embraces occasional retitling, removal of delaying commas, and a dash of word-refinement. Yet, collectively, these slight alterations are significant in that they shift the needle of his poetic compass in the direction of smoother diction, clarity of expression and a maturer understanding of human experience. A change of title from *Glory* to *Megalomania* and a surprising inclusion of *In the flight of that tern, which from soaring rock* in the 1937 group of poems reveal a deepening moral sense. This development, best appreciated if the book is read backwards, passes from lyrical cameos to plain statements of personal responsibility and reaches dilemma in what Mr. Dyment calls "a world of lies." And there, where we would have him continue, he stops. I feel that Mr. Dyment is on the threshold of a big decision and his next book, provided it is not a warmed-up dish of his previous ones, but is a complete and unified expression of recent personal exploration and discovery should be of considerable importance in helping a tottering world to achieve, first, stability and then, direction. His language has rarely lacked vigour and it remains adequate throughout.

Mr. Blunden's reputation as a Nature poet is high. His skill as an interpreter of the English scene has not been challenged. But, in these verses, he looks on Nature with the unblinking eye of a camera and his interpretation is shallow. Consequently, where there might have been perception and delight there is cataloguing and staleness. The verses of *Nature's Beauty, during a crisis of war* illustrate this precisely. Poets do not fail or succeed

according to tenets held concerning modernism or tradition, but according to the integrity with which they explore inward and outward experience and the sincerity with which they interpret that exploration for us. Mr. Blunden's work fails because it does not explore. It is verse-accomplishment, harmless, quiet, pleasant, plain, without the healing innocence which some of his poems conveyed to the reader after the 1914-1918 war, and it is void of vision. A spiritual stability needs to be established everywhere today; and, although I have been an admirer and a purchaser of Mr. Blunden's books for twenty years, I do not hesitate to say that verse like this will not suffice :

"Nine fluffy sparrows in a shrub
Have much to say and nothing much."

In his introduction to the three essays comprising *Poetic Technique (Stream and Structure of English Poetry: Composition of English Poetry: Rendering of English Verse)* Walter de la Mare rightly says, "There are traces of the dogmatic, even of the polemical—they give edge to the argument and stir up our wits." They do, which is to the good of the schoolboy and student. But, whereas Dr. Ellis invites, intrigues and captivates with nonsense and with truth, Mr. Johnson cudgels us with staves of solid rules. Everyone knows that rules are made for fools, but not necessarily for poets. Hence twenty-two do's and don'ts of poetic composition, though good for discussion in sixth forms and literary debating societies, are less good for the poet, who will go and grow his own way to the exasperation of the critic and to the joy and fulfilment of himself. Nevertheless, Mr. Johnson writes with the courage that accompanies conviction. Mrs. Burniston, in her contribution, is wise to know and emphasize that what matters most in the speaking of verse is : sensibility, sincerity and intelligence. This book will never make a poet but it should help to school the slovenly.

J. K. G. Hoffman.

The Old Knight: Herbert Palmer (Dent, 7s. 6d.).

ONE of our older poets still writes with the spirit and fire of a young man, for youth is a necessary ingredient of spontaneity and enthusiasm. Among much cerebral debris of intellectualism, complexity, and perversion, often miscalled poetry today, Mr. Palmer's verse sweeps like a strong wind which may also blow soft as a blue zephyr. No dust remains in our eyes and minds when we have read his latest book.

The Old Knight is well-named, for the author, who might have lived hundreds of years ago, writes with a speared pen, and tilts in the jousts against sin and the follies of modern civilization. Here is poetry which sings unashamed of love, life, and passion, and rings with the conflict between heaven and hell. Mr. Palmer is primarily a bard, scorning the pretentious, unafraid of the commonplace. His verse is free of obscurity, and its symbolism is clear as the sky, moon and stars which are often used in the service of heaven.

Among much atheism and agnosticism today, one is thankful for strong religious conviction, while at the same time aware that this writer reveals and revels in the doings of the devil. Mr. Palmer does not suffer from contemporary poetic anæmia. Though injured in the jousts, his wounds run, not with red ink, but rich blood that can blossom into a rose of poetry. He makes pain creative not only of fine apocalyptic verse, but of tenderness as in *Prayer for a Lady*, *Is that Enough?* and *Who is This?* which opens:

"Who is this that comes
With harp-strings in his forehead,
And strange wings fanning his long hair streaming,
Upon his tongue a thousand glimmering flames?
He is one with the wind and the wind's pauses.
The green tree knows him, and the forest flowers
Bend not beneath his passing;"

Cats of the Sky, *Moon Flea*, and *The Conquerors* are eloquent of conflict while *Prayer to the Wild* surges to life with mountain streams, wind and storm, illustrating the dynamic force of nature in his work.

Think not of me as old and grey sings Mr. Palmer in the title poem. Indeed, judging by his work, it would be difficult to do so. Even those who scorn simplicity and clarity must warm to a spirit of youth that burns on in the poet of threescore years and ten, and few readers could refuse his plea to:

"Think not of me as leafless bole,
An old tree stricken by the blast,
But think of me as spirit, soul—
Where all of us can meet at last."

PHŒBE HESKETH.